



VETERANS VOICE

Winnebago County Department of Veterans Services Newsletter

September 2023

Suicide Prevention Resources

When you're in crisis, it can be hard to see a way forward. And when you get to that point, suicide may seem like the only option. It's not.

Preventing Veterans suicide is VA's top clinical priority, not only because they want to save lives, but also because they know it's possible to prevent suicide.

The thought of getting support can be daunting if you've been suffering silently. But there are resources available and people who want to help you.

Where to start

If you're thinking about hurting yourself, having thoughts of suicide, or becoming self-destructive, the caring, qualified responders at the Veterans Crisis Line are ready to listen and help you make a plan to stay safe. Day or night, you can call (dial 988, then press 1), chat (VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat) or text (838255) to receive crisis support.

Support doesn't have to end with your conversation. Responders can connect you with the resources you need, including your local suicide prevention coordinator who will contact you the next business day for continued help.

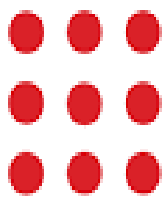
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“If you were born with the weakness to fall, you were born with the strength to rise.”

- Rupri Kaur

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Veterans Crisis Line

DIAL 988 then PRESS 1

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Remember: The Veterans Crisis Line is free and confidential. You decide how much information to share with responders. You also don't have to be enrolled in VA benefits or health care to connect.

VA and community resources are available

No matter what you're experiencing, The VA is here to connect you with support systems all over the country to help. All Veterans and their loved ones can use the following VA and non-VA resources:

- [VA Suicide Prevention](#): Explore suicide prevention resources to build networks or support among community-based organizations, Veterans Service Organizations, health care providers, and other members of your community that strengthen protective factors for Veterans.
- [VA's Resource Locator](#): This tool can connect you to the nearest resources within 10 miles from your ZIP code. Results will include the type of resource and its name, address and phone number, a link to its website, and the distance from the ZIP code you entered.
- [Make the Connection](#): More than 600 Veterans and family members from across the country have shared their stories of strength and recovery. It only takes a few seconds to find a story just for you.
- [Don't wait. Reach out](#): Get support designed specifically for you. Family members or friends can find resources for the Veterans in your life.
- [National Resource Directory](#): This connects wounded warriors, Veterans, service members, their families and caregivers to national, state, and local services and resources.
- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Behavioral Health Treatment Services](#): This tool, which is confidential and anonymous, allows people to search by ZIP code for local treatment facilities that focus on substance use/addiction and/or mental health issues.
- [Mental Health America](#): Learn how mental health is a critical part of overall wellness and find out about prevention services, early identification and intervention, and integrated care, services and support.

Life can be challenging and coping with those challenges is stressful for anyone. But there are options. Reaching out for help is the first step on a journey of healing.



ValorFit

It is estimated that approximately 21 Veterans take their own lives every day. Female Veterans are over 2 times more likely to take their own lives than male Veterans. One in five military service personnel returning from Iraq and Afghanistan have PTSD and 41% of post-9/11 Veterans leave service with VA Service-Connected Disability ratings.

ValorFit believes self-worth should not be left on the battlefield. They want to engage and ignite a renewed confidence in Veterans through fitness.

Fitness builds strength, but being surrounded by like minded Veterans builds something even more important, confidence and pride in self. ValorFit exists to build your strength, build your confidence, and ignite your passion for life. ValorFit provides free or discounted gym services to Veterans.

Ardent Fitness & Education in Oshkosh has become a Gym Affiliate with ValorFit. To find out more about Ardent please go to <https://ardentoshkosh.com>.

Suicide Prevention: How To Bring Up The Tough Questions

How do you spot signs of struggle and have that difficult conversation with a Veteran contemplating suicide?

We all probably encounter the same version of the same conversation at least once a day. Either you ask the question, or someone asks you: How are you? How do you answer? I would bet many people have a similar answer: I'm fine. But are you really fine? Or are you just being polite? Or answering on autopilot? Or maybe you don't want to burden anyone with what you're going through?

Many of us, for a variety of reasons, can identify with not answering this question truthfully. But what do you do if a Veteran friend or family member tells you they're fine, but you can see signs they're struggling?

How to recognize signs of crisis

The idea of talking to anyone about suicide can feel uncomfortable or awkward. But small actions, like taking a few minutes to have a conversation with a Veteran you care about, can make a big difference. You can start by looking for signs of crisis. Although every Veteran is different, and many may not show any obvious sign of intent to kill themselves, some actions and behaviors can be a sign they need help.

Starting the conversation

Whether you spot any signs of crisis or not, it's important to have a conversation if you think something is wrong. You don't have to be an expert to talk to a Veteran facing challenges. You just need to show genuine care and concern. You can read through the [crisis conversation handout](#) to learn about some things to keep in mind before you talk with the Veteran.

Here are some highlights:

- Make supportive and encouraging comments. Don't ask invasive personal questions.
- Don't inject judgement or emotion in the conversation. Stay calm.
- Listen more than you speak. Don't dominate the conversation.
- Remind them you are there for them.
- Let them decide how much to share.

When you and the Veteran are ready to talk, here are some ways to start the conversation.

- "It sounds like you're feeling incredibly (insert appropriate feeling here - trapped, overwhelmed, betrayed, etc.). Sometimes when people feel this way, they think about suicide. Is this something you're thinking about?"
- "When did you first start feeling like killing yourself?"
- "Did something happen that made you begin to feel like taking your life?"

When responding to answers from a Veteran, remember that simple, reassuring feedback goes a long way in showing support and encouraging seeking help:

- "I'm here for you. How do you hurt and how can I help?"
- "Can we talk for a while and see if we can find a way to keep you safe right now?"

Although you hope your friend or loved one isn't considering suicide, what if they say they are? Follow these steps:

- Inform them they can dial 988, then press 1 to reach the Veterans Crisis Line or ask if they'd like to call together.
- Assess whether the Veteran is in crisis, and then determine if he or she has already initiated a plan to kill themselves or injure others, or has an immediate plan to do so, with access to means.
- Try to find out where the Veteran is located and whether anyone else is nearby.
- For immediate emergency or medical assistance, call 911

Remember: Asking if someone is having thoughts of suicide will not give them the idea or increase their risk. It could save their life.

Upcoming Event

Family Self Sufficiency

Salvation Army Holiday Sign up



The Salvation Army - Oshkosh

Seasonal Assistance Program

Sign - Up Information

There will be NO In-Person Sign-Up

Coats For Kids Sign - Up

For Birth - 18 yrs. (school age)

September 5th - October 23rd, 2023

To sign - up online go to: saoshkosh.org

Go to Program & Services Page and
click on the corresponding link

OR

Scan QR Code with phone camera & follow link



Toy Store (Toys For Tots) Sign - Up

For Birth - 18 yrs. (school age)

September 5th - November 27th, 2023

To sign - up online go to: saoshkosh.org

Go to Program & Services Page and click on the cor-
responding link

OR

Scan QR Code with phone camera

& follow link



If no online access, call 920-232-7660 ask for:

Al Rolph, Lisa Winkler or Patty Zastrow

To Register Over The Phone

CONTACT US

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(920) 232-3400

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Stay informed about bene-
fits; join our e-mail list.
Send a request to:

CVSO@winnebagoountywi.gov

Visit us on the web at:

[www.winnebagoountywi.gov/
veterans](http://www.winnebagoountywi.gov/veterans)



www.facebook.com/WinnebagoCVSO

For a list of more events,
check out our [calendar](#) !